



SPRING 2014

The Literary Arts Magazine of University of Houston–Clear Lake

BAYOUSPHERE ~ 2014

The Literary Arts Magazine of University of Houston – Clear Lake
2700 Bay Area Blvd., Box 456
Houston, TX 77058



Editor's Note

This electronic-only issue of the *Bayosphere* afforded us the opportunity to use color in the design and layout. When we thought about the design for this issue, we wanted to keep it simple and clean. Maybe we played it safe by using the UHCL brand design colors, but we thought they were apropos for the inaugural color publication.

In addition to using color in the design, we were also faced with the challenge of designing a publication without imagery. Traditionally, the *Bayousphere* has featured both text and images, however for this issue no imagery was submitted.

Sadly, with this issue, we bid a fond farewell to *Bayousphere* founder Dr. John Gorman as he retires from professional teaching after 39 years. Dr. Gorman often shared his enthusiasm for American literature, modern poetry and creative writing with students through teaching and advising. He leaves an indelible mark not only on this publication but also on the School of Human Sciences and Humanities and UHCL as a whole.

Thank you for your service to the UHCL community, Dr. Gorman. We wish you fair winds and following seas!

Eileen Walsh
Editor
Bayousphere Spring 2014



BAYOSPHERE STAFF

EDITOR/PROJECT MANAGER

Eileen Walsh

ART DIRECTOR/DESIGNER

Brenda Fixel

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Shawn Domingues

FACULTY ADVISER

Anne Henry

FACULTY ADVISER

Dr. Hunter Stephenson



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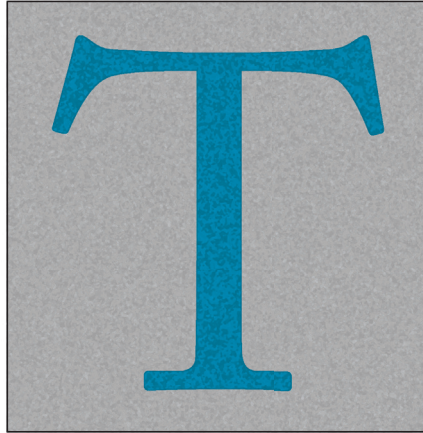
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The Next Adventure

by Sarah Rodriguez



he first time I visited Arty Andrews he told me about the adventures he had during the Vietnam War.

He recited the story of how he met his future wife and how he won her heart over a game of chess. I, as a high school student, was there for volunteer hours so I could graduate. Mr. Andrews didn't care, he was just happy to finally have a visitor. Most patients in the nursing home never had visitors and the staff cared for each patient equally.

"We're all here for one of two reasons," Mr. Andrews told me once. "Either to die with family or to die alone."

I guess that was true. In all the time I spent volunteering in the nursing home a total of fifteen patients came and went, five of them had their families with them when they passed. Mr. Andrews would always

shake his head when a patient passed away and he refused to speak with anyone for a few days.

"I'm paying respects to the dead. I saw some people doing it somewhere back in Vietnam," he explained one day.

Arty rarely talked about the war after the first day, but when he did it was always something bittersweet. He once told me about a mother who was cradling her child in her arms and singing a lullaby in a sea of the dead.

"It was a strangely beautiful sight," Arty said. "I can't really explain it all that well, but it was picture worthy."

Arty always said he wished he had taken more pictures when he was still young. He always complained about his bad memory, but we both knew he had a picture perfect memory. He remembered his wife's eyes, she had passed a year or two before. He remembered the day his daughter, who never visited, never paid any of the bills for Arty's residence in the home, was born.

"Arty only has a few days to live," the doctors said.

"The combination of lung cancer and old age has finally caught up to him."

"We'll give you a call if anything happens."

"It's because you visit," Arty said, solemnly, when I asked him why the doctors would tell me these things.

I got the long awaited call sooner than I had expected. I was settling into bed when a standard alarm blared harshly from my phone. The sudden light in my dark room

hurt my eyes and I seriously considered ignoring the call.

"He's dying," a nurse said on the other side of the call. "His daughter told us to call her when he's died. He isn't going to have anyone with him."

The nursing home was only a few minutes from my home. I left a note for my parents stating where I was. It was fine with them, Arty called at strange hours of the night sometimes, when his mind wandered to distant seas. When I arrived, the nurse for the night silently guided me to Arty's room. The home always gave off a lonely feeling during the day time, but the feeling was more like a dark, remote island

of night. The light from the street lamp outside sneaked in through the blinds on the window and scattered an orange glow on the white, polished floor of the home. Most of the rooms had the lights turned off as the patients slept, but one room's lights were turned on. The harsh, florescent light illuminated the whole of the hallway and

created some sort of eerie white pathway to Arty's death bed.

"Are

you ready for one last adventure?" Arty asked when I entered the room.

"I'm ready if you are," I told him. He chuckled and looked up at the ceiling in silence. I'd heard from some of the nurses that patients whose families never visited usually wanted to be around people when passing, but were silent most of the time.

"They called Emily," Arty said suddenly. "I heard them outside. She's not coming until I die."

"Do you want me to tell her anything?"

I asked.

"Tell her that I tried."

Tears started to collect in my eyes, but I held back. Crying came later, after it was over.

"Did I ever tell you how I met my wife?" he asked, setting his dimming eyes on me. I nodded and sat down on a plastic white chair next to the bed.

"She was so beautiful, with her blonde hair pulled up in a ponytail. Most of the other girls in town had cut their hair short, but she kept hers long. I think Emily gets her looks from her mother. She always liked her mother best."

Arty fussed over the white sheets of his bed for a while. I'm sure he noticed that the steady beep of the heart monitor was slowing down. His eyes were getting narrower and narrower with each story. He was inches away from death. He extended his hand to me and I took it.

"You're about to go to college aren't you?"

"Yes, I've already been accepted."

"That's going to be a pretty big adventure," Arty smiled.

"Not as big as the one you're taking," I

"I'm sure he noticed that the steady beep of the heart monitor was slowing down."

muttered, my voice hoarse.

"I want you to have something," Arty said after a few minutes. His voice was light, less than a whisper. He reached over to his left hand and I watched as he plucked his wedding ring from his finger and placed it in my shaking hand.

"I can't take this, Arty," I whispered.

"You have to, otherwise Emily won't believe you when you tell her..." he trailed off and turned his head to the window.

"When I tell her what?" I asked.

"When you tell her what you feel is right," Arty smiled. We sat in silence for a few minutes. And the minutes turned to an hour.

"Are you scared?" I asked him, suddenly. I couldn't stop the question, but Arty didn't mind. I had been visiting him for four years and he knew that I could never quite keep my thoughts to myself.

"Terrified," Arty admitted. I had to strain to hear his voice. He was almost gone, the heart monitor told me. That thin red line slashed at my vision and stung my mind and forced my voice into silence.

"To die would be an awfully big adventure," Arty said, laughing a little. The line jumped less and less. I watched as it started to settle, like a pile of disrupted dust, never to be aroused again.

"Are you scared?" Arty asked. The line repeated a pattern of nothing. It was just a straight red line, nothing amazing about it. It was an insignificantly meaningful line

that would never spike into the air again. A dull buzz filled the white room. Arty lay there, dead.

The nurse from before came into the room an hour or two later to wheel Arty out of the room.

"Do you want to call his daughter?" the nurse asked. I took the phone from his hand silently and pressed the call button.

"This is Emily." She answered on the fifth ring. Right before the call went to voice mail.

"He was scared and alone," I said into the phone, emotionless.

"I'm sorry?" Emily asked. Behind her voice a baby cried in a room somewhere.

"You're from the old folk's home, right?" Emily said. "Is my dad dead?"

"Yes." I answered.

"Ok, just fax the bill to me and I'll sort it out ASAP."

"Didn't you just hear me?" I yelled. "Your father is dead and all you care about is a damn bill?"

"Excuse me, but I'm not going to pay anything if you keep using that tone with me."

I had a few choice words and phrases that I could have used right then to describe just exactly how I felt toward the woman on

the other side of the phone. Arty's ring burned into my skin as I clenched my fist. I hung up and handed the phone to the nurse before walking out.

I walked into the funeral home a week later. I never understood why, at the end of one's life, they had to visit many different homes. A nursing home. A funeral home. Maybe it had something to do with respecting the dead. Who wouldn't want to pass through a home of some sort before they're finally laid to rest? Arty's funeral was held in a small church. Emily, with a crying child, sat in the front with the rest of Arty's surviving family. I sat in the last

row with some of the nurses from the home.

"Didn't you just hear me?" I yelled. "Your father is dead and all you care about is a damn bill?"

It was odd that the people who had been around Arty in his final moments were condemned to the back of the church while people who hardly cared enough to visit Arty were allowed to sit in the front. Why should his family lay claim to his body if they never bothered to visit? Why should they start loving Arty the moment he died?

"Whether they'll admit it or not, they're starting to feel remorse for not visiting Arty," a nurse said. She wiped tears from her eyes and said a silent prayer.

"You're the one who talked to me on

the phone, aren't you?" Emily asked, pushing the nurse I was talking to aside.

"Yes."

"Let me tell you how rude you were, I'm going to call the manager—"

"I don't even work there," I told her as calmly as I could. "And I wasn't the one being rude, you were."

"Excuse me?" Emily squawked.

"You weren't rude to me, I don't matter, but you were rude to your father. He was always waiting for you to visit and you never came. All he wanted was you to be at his side when he died, but you weren't there. He was scared and alone."

"Well, unlike you, I had other things to do. I had a child to take care of," Emily said, shoving her baby at me for emphasis. She had no idea how much ammo that one gesture gave me.

"There's another thing. Arty would have loved to see his grandbaby. In fact, that boy looks a lot like Arty," I said, smiling slightly. The baby boy smiled back and cooed. Emily looked like she had just been brutally assaulted.

"You don't know anything about my family or me!" she shrieked. "You have no right to talk to me about what I should have done with my father or my child."

Two police officers who worked at the funeral home were headed my way. Emily cursed and yelled at me, but I wasn't listening. I had to tell her one thing before I left.

I grabbed her arm and forced her to look into my eyes.

"He told me to tell you that he tried," I whispered. Emily was shocked into silence. I retrieved Arty's ring from my pocket and handed it to Emily.

"Is there a problem here ma'am?" one of the officers asked Emily. She didn't answer, but looked at the ring in her hand instead.

"There's no problem officer, I was just leaving," I told him.

A few weeks later, as I was packing to leave for college, I received a letter from Emily. She said she had been told by some of the nurses about my many visits to her father and that she was grateful that he had had someone with him in his final moments. Packed in the envelope with the letter was Arty's ring. Emily said that Arty would have wanted me to have it.


They say your first death is the hardest, but Arty's death, while making me sad, taught me to love the people around me more. To love, even if you get no love in return, because those people could be gone at any moment. To love, because loving is just a part of the biggest adventure in the world; life.



Taproot

by Donna Cozart Pauley


The taproot of the loblolly pine
runs deep and true
straight through my grandmother's heart.
The tree flows, not with sap,
but with her blood
which feeds the rich, red soil.
A perfectly symmetrical pine cone
now houses her soul.
There's no need to travel to heaven
when it already lies under the feet.
Thoreau has taught her well.



The Hitchhiker

by Donna Cozart Pauley

1968
Panola County
two-lane highway just past Nigger Ridge.
The old farmer in his Ford pickup,
a young girl in the passenger seat,
the wind from the open window ruffles her short brown hair,
drying the sweat on her neck from the summer heat.
They approach a bandy-legged black man
walking on the side of the road.
The pickup slows, pulling to the shoulder
as the man trots to the open driver's window,
his face mapped with rivers of age,
belying his jaunty step.
“Where you headed?” the farmer asks.
“Carthage, suh.”
“Hop on in”...
He lifts his thin leg, his patched pants pulling tight across his slim hips,
and climbs into the bed of the truck, settling in the tire well.
“Pawpaw,” the girls says, “We got room up front.
Why don't he sit up here with us?”
His square brown hands gripping the steering wheel,
he turns to look at his granddaughter
to determine if she speaks in jest,
gently sighs when he realizes she does not,
silently puts his truck in gear,
slowly pulling back onto the highway.



Paradox

by Donna Cozart Pauley

My brother could walk through a
field blanketed
with thousands of migrating snow geese
and not one fly away,
charm wild rabbits
into eating from his proffered hand,
casually pick up moccasins and timber rat-
tlers
behind their poison-swollen jaws.
To entertain his little sisters,
he captured dragonflies that flitted about in
the summertime,
somehow managing to tie bright red thread
around their bodies

to fly them through the blue air like irides-
cent-winged kites,
and patiently coaxed lizards to clamp onto
his ear lobes,
dangling, lime-green earrings with soft,
white underbellies.
Our menagerie of pets over the years:
a squirrel, two skunks, too many raccoons to
count,
a possum, quails, ducks, a broken-winged
hawk,
three hairless baby barn rats (which we hid
from our mother).
He captured many of our erstwhile compan-
ions in the back woods
while searching for his elusive holy grail – a
bobcat den.

Searching for a lost book one afternoon,
I found a shoe box stashed under his bed,
opening it to reveal a Bluebeardian horror.
It held one wing cut from each bird he had
brought down:
sparrow, blue jay, cardinal, blackbird, mock-
ingbird ...
shot with the same B-B gun he used with
deadly aim
to knock bees off the TV antenna,
to torment little sisters.



Pawpaw's Mule

by Donna Cozart Pauley

He hitches up the plow before the sun
(or his grandchildren)

have even thought about rising.

"Haw, Kate! Haw!" he calls out to his old
red mule,

as she obstinately turns to the left,

twitching off the stinging horseflies in the
early morning air.

Pawpaw is in his usual attire –

faded overalls, a long-sleeved shirt,

thick-soled boots, a short-brimmed straw
hat –

walking behind the mule as she pulls the
antique apparatus

down the soft, sandy rows of the pea patch.

The wooden handles of his plow

are worn smooth as ivory

from the many years of hard, steady use.

His cantankerous Kate has the loudest bray
in the county,

echoing up from the bottom
pasture,

sassing her master at every
turn of the plow.

If he calls out *"Gee!"* and she refuses to turn
right,

with a flick of his wrist, he pops the thick
leather strap

right between her big mule ears, standing
straight up like two young corn stalks.

One afternoon Kate decides to head to her
stall for supper

instead of plowing that particular row

at that particular time.

Braying loudly, kicking her back hooves,

and pulling the heavy plow behind,

she tears down a quarter mile of barbed-
wire fence,

posts and all.

The last time I saw Kate,
my grandfather was loading her up in the
trailer

to take her to the weekly livestock sale.

He hesitated a moment, patting her thick
neck.

“Паўпав,” I called out to him,

“what you gonna do with ole Kate?”

Not offering an answer,

he sat down in the driver’s seat,

looking back in the rearview mirror,

a solitary tear slowing making its way

down his brown, leathery cheek.

I had never seen him cry before.

And it would be many, many years

before I saw him cry again.

As they drove down the road toward town,

I could hear Kate sadly braying into the
wind

as if she knew her final destination.



La Mirada

by Heather Minette Schutmaat

She sits on the edge of the bed,
with her knees tucked under her chin.

“Give me that look,” he says,
“that look you always give me.”

Unaware of the particular look,
she doesn’t know she gives,
she raises her head and smiles.

“Yes,” he says,
“that’s a good one too.”



Disclaimer

by Stephen Defferari

If you happen to
Find me playfully
Pitching my last
Pennies down a
Dry well, please
Have the decency
Not to ask what
I wish for, and I
Won't have the
Audacity to make
You several cents
Wealthier



Semblance of Intricacy

by Stephen Defferari

To feel the way you felt
Before you fell down would
Defeat the purpose of feeling
Altogether, though you should
Not consider it so much a
Fall than an accidental
Reacquaintance with yourself,
In an intricate act of irony.



Florence Sun

by Heather Minette Schutmaat

Water rushes from the pail, splashes from the flowerpot, and chills her bare feet. She thinks of the Florence sun, beating hot against her neck. It's November now. Three months since she left Italy. Three months still living there in her mind. Whispering memories and small stories to herself on her Texas balcony, between breaths of the thick, humid air, "it didn't rain once while I was there. The sun followed me to Italy." She's allowed to remember it how she wants to, this time.

The sugary scent of gelato filling the city, the sun mirroring itself on the river at sunrise and sunset, the rich red wine and lips stained purple, the wobbly tables set with candles and tucked away in corners

where two streets meet, the piazzas and markets and accordions, and statues so convincing in the street light that for a

"She can script it how she wants to, so she won't remember him. Or his penetrating brown eyes..."

second you reason that one just moved, the architecture and artwork so surreal it makes you dizzy or so beautiful it makes you cry, the gentle echoes of church bells dancing through the streets, the talking with hands and the rhythmic resonance of the language, and of course, that moment she had on the terrace – alone under an Italian sky – when

she looked inward and really saw herself for the first time. She was alone because she's allowed to remember it how she wants to, this time.

She can script it how she wants to, so she won't remember him. Or his penetrating

brown eyes and tenderly messy hair or the way he swept her off her feet and off the wet cobble stone streets the night that it rained, or the photographs he took the day she wore a red dress, or his

hand on her knee when they drove to the coast. Or the sudden regret that filled her heart the first time he took her by the hand.

Remembering him means that the same, familiar story has taken place once again:

She flew across the world to find herself and instead found a man.



Multiple Thoughts of

by James Elmore



*s my dad entered the bar, he
looked at the line of tequila
drinks in front me,*

“Two down and multiple shooters... that’s going to hurt later,” he chuckled.

“Yes” I replied, “but the alcohol doesn’t hurt near as much as the memories do.” Ending up in the neighborhood bar became an unwanted tradition. The war in Iraq needed intelligence operators, and my skill level made me a hot commodity. So upon deployment notifications, dad always invited me back home. “Your mother worries,” he would say, when deep inside I knew he did, too. After oversized dinners with lots of laughter, reassurances to mom about my safety and her hugs that always seemed to linger a little longer than usual, I would end up here at the bar. The clinking glasses and familiar burn of that blue agave drink helped me to convince myself I would be alright this

time. With closed eyes, the smells, sounds, and visual horrors of near-death were too much to burden the ones I just reassured.

“Do you like gambling?” dad asked as he sat down and ordered a beer. “In a gallows humor sort of way, it seems kind of obvious, doesn’t it Dad?” He placed his big, protective hand on my shoulder and said, “When you get back from this deployment, you will have some leave coming... how about a trip to Las Vegas?”

Two weeks later, as I stepped off the C-130 aircraft and felt the dusty wind envelop my body; I knew I was back in Iraq. For the next eight months, my document exploitation teams chased after high value targets. Sent as part of bigger patrol teams, we always worked at night, but the night was soft protection. The insurgents knew our patterns. As our military vehicles entered the city from the north, the street and porch lights became lit by the knowing eyes of the enemy highlighting the patrol’s every movement. So when it happened, it was almost expected. The explosion, poorly timed, had detonated between our vehicles. I regained consciousness to the repetitious clinking of bullets against the vehicle and the burning dust filled air of the enclosed cabin. The patrol team, trying to set up a

Multiple Shots

perimeter to access the damaged vehicles and the wounded inside, were receiving heavy enemy fire. As I tried to clear the ringing from my ears, I felt the protective hand of Sergeant Carter on my shoulder. Now on foot as we accounted for the vehicle's occu-

pants, we engaged the enemy hugging the walls for cover as we withdrew. As we extracted ourselves in the other support vehicles from the neighborhood, I heard the request for a situational report. A voice on the radio crackled,

"Two down, and multiple shooters..." I was alright, and for the duration of the deployment, patrols continued, high value targets chased, and walls and buddies were hugged: each comforting in the reassurances and protection they provided.

As I sat in the casino contemplating the last eight months away, I felt the squeeze of dad's hand on my shoulder as he walked up behind me at the slot machine I was playing.

"As I tried to clear the ringing from my ears, I felt the protective hand of Sergeant Carter on my shoulder."

"How do you feel?" he asked. "This was a good idea," I replied. "I still have flashes, little things that slip me back." Dad replied, "They will fade over time. It was the same for me with Vietnam." I wondered if they would.

Do I tell him that staring into this slot machine as it spun cherries across the glass reminds me of blood spattered windows? Or that the clinking sound of money dropping reminds me of weapons safeties going "hot" for imminent danger? Dad gave another squeeze:

"Hey, you're thinking too much. Let's play

some Craps."

I knew Dad was right. They were just fresh memories that, while never forgotten, would fade over time. At the Craps table, as I stepped to the line, the box man declared,

"Two down, with a new shooter!" As the smile crossed my face, I knew I would be alright.



Dots called Doves *for all intents and purposes*

by Stephen Defferari

'Dwindle' is the world that didn't come to mind,

Word was meant though it means the same in a
Roundabout way,

Specifically, we furrow our brows at faraway
Things when the sun is especially itself,

Two dots in the distance called doves for all intents
And purposes,

Synchronized daydreams don't count as meaningful
Connections,

Shadows overlapped on the grass doesn't mean this
Is supposed to be romantic,

All the while your hand sweats inside mine and I
Can't bring myself to say

'Stop doing that circulation thing with your thumb'
Much less anything else,

Our eyes are no more synchronized than our lives
Are syncretized

(She wouldn't understand),

Somewhere in your mind, the number of minutes our

Hands remain intact, when multiplied by a constant
Number,

Indicates commitment, and compatibility, in terms of
Days, months, years,

And the straightest distance between two hearts is an extremely
Erratic line,

Something cliché like that.



Rooftops

by Heather Minette Schutmaat

I looked for her on the rooftops of Brooklyn,
the makeshift balconies of Manhattan,
and the subway in between.

On the mountaintops of Spain,
the dirty pubs of Dublin,
and every European train.

On southern country roads,
and the foothills of Tennessee,
and a lake house preserving childhood dreams.

In the classrooms of philosophers and mystics,
the offices of scholars,
and the garden of a Buddhist.

In a home painted yellow,
behind an ill-fitting apron,
and white picket fence.

In the cramped apartments of men who wrote,
and drank,
and beneath the sheets of those who understood.

On the folded pages of library books,
the texture of painted canvas,
and the sound of piano keys.

I looked for her through my bedroom window,
barefoot and hardly clothed,
not lonely, but alone.

I looked for her,
and did not find her,
but instead, created her.



True / False

by Stephen Defferari

Equal parts blood and

Currency equals the theoretical equilibrium:

Someone's death equals someone's dollar,

Someone's dollar equals someone's gain,

Someone's gain equals someone's loss -

Around and around we go.

Too much of either tips the scales to vagabondage or vanity;

Too little of either creates a problem of unequal absolutes:

Few will live in named castles,

Most will dwell in numbered homes,

While the rest happily huff, puff, and burn them all down

And round we go again.

Hornet Throne

by Stephen Defferari

'Being there' was the burden of erring ere the air,
And our heir was there on a hornet throne,
Amid mists and syphilitic aristocrats at solitaire,

Their thickets kept warm for trysts that never
Became wildfires, love-making copses is what they
Never became, though the entanglement of leaf

And ant and splayed hair formed a quaint image
The eyes never needed, and the scent of which was
Cents in need, yet the sound of someone else breathing

Heavily in the woods made the morning fog
Bearable, but not breathable, but oh the end did
Dally yonder where the distance was best

When viewed from afar, though I imagine some
Things have to feel their way through the world
Without wind chimes to guide them to and fro,

Yesterday daylight housed light within light
Houses, simply for the benefit of tautological tarot
Cards, or werewolves in women's clothes,

And I can't remember who it was that said
'Loneliness is supercalifragilisticexpialidocious,'
But let's just assume by way of circumspection

That is was a pantheistic pantomime.

Bridges

by Heather Minette Schutmaat

We're standing on the front porch, this time. I'm barefoot and tired, with one hand resting on my hip and the other gripping the knob of the front door – more of a gestured statement than a threat, really, or perhaps just self-assurance that this time I might not follow you. You run your fingers through your hair, tugging it at the scalp, and brushing it from your forehead. You shove your hands into your pockets, shuffle your feet, and clear your throat. This recognized sequence is how I know it's coming – your routine, three-part apology. Only this time, I've made the mindful decision not to listen.

I'm looking above your right shoulder, now, and into the front yard, where autumn light cascades and casts shadows that sway beneath the trees, and your voice becomes so distant that I find myself engaged,

wholeheartedly, in a daydream of a man who looks just like you, standing right in front of me. He has the same sharp jawline and eyes that squint when he laughs, the same calloused hands, and the same mind full of potential and ingenuity. But he is not apologizing and his hands are not in his pockets – they're in the air, animating his account of all the qualities that somehow set me apart from the other, more ordinary women.

The mason jars centered carefully on our coffee table, full of the wildflowers I pick on my way home from the bus station, and the photographs I take of bridges and balloons, and the books about feminism situated cunningly between the cookbooks in our kitchen. The nights I drink too much red wine and show my insincere concern for boring him with fancy terms like “paradigm shift,” or rambling on about my

artistic master plan. The way I study Buddhism because I want not to be Buddhist, or anything other than myself, but because I want to live life more like them. The day I was diagnosed with a life threatening disease, and did not come home and grieve, but instead made coffee and planted daisies and geraniums. The afternoon I said that if I ever became a mother, the first thing I would do is plant an orange tree outside my baby's bedroom window.

You've paused and cleared your throat again – disrupting my musing and prompting my one-part pardon. But my eyes are still fixed on the autumn light – illuminating all the reasons why I should love myself – too much for all of this. And I love you – too much to not respond, so I bite my lip and shake my head slowly, in sync with the shadows, and my gut turns the knob.



Josephine

by Stephen Defferari

Middle-aged man in grey suit dies facedown at
Neighborhood park, kite he was flying still attached
To clenched fist, loiters playfully in the air
Afterwards like some kind of spiritual periscope,
Crashes into adjacent swing-set where some
Teenagers talk about the advantages of megalomania,
One picks up kite, joke about the idyllic absurdity
Of kites in general, see guy facedown still holding
String, walk over to him, stare in blank apprehension,
Not sure what to do, one nudges guy with foot, says
He thinks he is dead with dramatic emphasis
Between “is” and “dead”, others agree that he is
Dead too, wonder why or how he died flying
A yellow kite, one suggests that maybe he
Attached a key to string and lightning struck
The key in an elaborate and historically significant
Method of suicide, don’t find key attached to
String, not a cloud in the sky, take out guy’s
Wallet, leave to tell someone, open wallet on way
And find a lot of cash, think they should find someone
To buy them cigarettes and beer with cash, go
To a nearby gas station and forget about finding
Someone to tell about the corpse with the kite in
The park, wait outside around the corner for
Someone who looks like he will buy them

Cigarettes and not rip them off or kick their ass,
Young guy in leather jacket named Brandon
Pulls-up in Camaro, kids ask if he will be cool
And buy them cigarettes and beer and keep rest of
Cash for himself, Brandon agrees, goes inside,
Buys a lot of beer and a few packs of smokes,
Goes out and gets back in car with beer and
Smokes, kids look from around the corner with
Distraught countenances, shout something about
Being cool, Brandon tells them to fuck off or
He will kick their ass, peels out as he drives away,
Smirks, laughs to himself at how dumb kids
Are, opens cigarettes, lights, takes long, deep drags,
Contemplates nothing, feels cool, rests hand in
Between legs, looks at sunset, shade and light
From a horizontal line that bisects his pupils,
He thinks of California, he thinks of beautiful
Yet empty ewers half buried in Sand, mumbles
Into rearview, irritated at old man riding too
Close to bumper, takes several short drags,
Turns up rock music, slicks back hair, feeling
Like Matt Dillon in that movie about avant-garde
Junkies in the Pacific Northwest, can’t remember the
Name, doesn’t matter, thinks about a girl named

Sundays

by Stephen Defferari

Josephine who wishes her name was psychopompos,
Her parents have a summer house in Acapulco,
Smokes joints rolled in Bible paper under a bridge,
Lost virginity to Todd, likes the word clairvoyant
Because it sounds sophisticated, Brandon calls
Josephine, no answer, sun down, drives to her house,
Parks three houses down, dad doesn't like him around,
Thinks he does drugs and uses a Ouija board to
Communicate with Elvis, goes through door
By fence, throws pebbles at her window, she opens,
Holds finger over lips to be quiet, dresses, sneaks out
Room and down hall, mother crying in other room
With door ajar, tiptoes downstairs, goes out back
Door, they hug, walk to Camaro, get in, peels out
Down street, laugh, she lights joint and says
Something about her mom being upset, something
About dad flying away with a phenomenologist,
Probably another woman, drive to park, ambulance
Going the opposite way, park, get beer, walk over
To swings, sit, drink and smoke in dark, talk about
The advantages of a dystopian society, Brandon sees
Kite in grass, picks up, sees writing on yellow nylon
Spells P-h-e-n-o-m-e-n-o-l-o-g-i-s-t.



And we were all of us antediluvian
In our dispositions, doused freckled

Limbs in rivers named after colors
And wondered if sins were as numerous

As stars, you can go ahead and prop
The sun up on stilts and make a lot

Of noise in the process if it makes you
Feel better about eschatology,

Anyone can discern the cistern's signs,
And it says 'misology, misology',

Most of the time, who wouldn't prefer
The simplicity of plateaus, or a wife

Who carves Christ figurines from
Coyote bones for teething tots,

Johnny was nude as a dune in June
To say the least, he said something

The other day, 'lost in the blood and
Backyard of one's own being', and

'Feeling out of sorts within and without
One's own skin', daisies upon the dais

Seemed so so-so sometimes, enough to
Anchor our eyes upon a heap of hills

And wonder why, but the clouds still
Don't give a shit about you or me,

Best to say sleep peels away the previous
Day's pulp from outside in,

For whatever unapparent reason.



Contributors

James Elmore is a retired military veteran after more than 22 years of service. He is currently a psychology major working towards therapy work for fellow veterans at the Veteran's Affairs Office/Hospital.

Donna Cozart Pauley, born in a town of 200 in the backwoods of East Texas, grew up with a widely extended family that included 10 grandparents, storytellers one and all. She is now a storyteller herself and was recently chosen as an Outstanding Teacher of the Humanities in the state of Texas, via the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Sarah Rodriguez is an aspiring young writer. Although still in high school, she has a great passion for writing.

Heather Minette Schutmaat recently graduated with a BA in Humanities and will soon study for an MA in Literature. Her poems and stories have been published in numerous magazines and ezines, including *Backhand Stories*, *The Blue Hour*, *Frost Writing* and *Up the Staircase*.

Stephen Defferari is a poet.



Editorial Policy and Submission Guidelines

The University of Houston–Clear Lake publishes Bayosphere annually to provide a creative outlet for its students and the community. Bayosphere accepts submissions in the areas of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, art, photography and digital media. Each entry is blind reviewed by the editorial staff and a certificate of merit is awarded to the highest-scoring work in each category.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: All material submitted must be the original work of the writer/artist. All materials accepted are subject to cropping or editing by the Bayosphere editorial staff, as they deem necessary. Materials should be submitted as follows:

Poetry must be typed. Submit work on disk along with a hard copy. Written manuscripts will not be returned.

Fiction and nonfiction must be typed, double spaced, and no longer than 2,000 words. Please include a word count on each submission. Submit work on disk along with a hard copy. Written manuscripts will not be returned.

Photographs must be black and white, no smaller than 5 x 7 inches, no larger than 11 x 14 inches. Submit on high resolution photography paper and saved on disc at 350 dpi. No framed work. Photographs may be retrieved after the magazine has been published. The Bayosphere staff is not responsible for any entries not picked up after one year. **NOTE:** Any photograph that

has been composited or manipulated in Photoshop more than it is possible to do in a darkroom belongs in the Original Art category.

Sculpture and other three-dimensional artwork must be photographed in black and white to be considered. (see previous paragraph for photo guidelines). **NOTE:** Sculptures and other three-dimensional artwork may also be photographed from varying angles and then brought into Quick Time Virtual Reality, Flash or a similar software program to present a virtual tour of the artwork as an entry in the digital media category.

Original artwork must be suitable for magazine publication. Bayosphere is printed in black and white, pastels, water colors and light pencil drawings do not reproduce well. Art work must not exceed 11 x 16 inches. No framed work. Original works of art may be retrieved after the magazine has been published. The Bayosphere staff is not responsible for any entries not picked up after one year. **NOTE:** Any photograph that has been composited or manipulated in Photoshop more than it is possible to do in a darkroom belongs in the Original Art category.

Digital Media consists of computer generated or animated works of art. Animated, i.e. moving images, work can include any of the following forms of digital media: Flash, Macromedia Director, Digital Video,

3D Animation, and Quick Time Virtual Reality. Submissions must be five minutes or less. Entries may be submitted on a CD. Submissions chosen from this category will be featured in the online version of the Bayosphere – therefore, entries for this category can be submitted in color.

Entry Forms: A completed entry form must accompany submitted work. Do not put your name on the actual work so that it can be blind reviewed. Entrants are limited to ten submissions in each category. Bayosphere entry forms may be downloaded by clicking on the “Bayosphere Entry Form” link at the top of this page.

How to Submit Work: Submissions for Bayosphere may be mailed to: Bayosphere c/o Dr. Hunter Stephenson, University of Houston–Clear Lake, 2700 Bay Area Blvd., Box 339, Houston, TX 77058, or delivered to Room 2109 of the Student Services and Classroom Building.

Deadline: Submissions to Bayosphere are accepted throughout the year. Any entries received after September will be considered for the following year’s publication.

Direct inquiries may be made by phone 281-283-3403 or by email: stephenson@uhcl.edu.

COLOPHON

SOFTWARE ~ Adobe CS6 InDesign and Illustrator

FONTS ~ Adobe Caslon Pro and Myriad Pro

SIZE ~ 11” x 8.5”





SPRING 2014

The Literary Arts Magazine of University of Houston–Clear Lake